

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Deputy Bureau Chief of Prisons, Paul G. Shavack, Public Information Officer

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First DOC inmate tests positive for COVID-19; DOC announces that two additional Correctional Officers test positive for COVID-19

Dover, DE – The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) announced today that an inmate at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center tested positive for COVID-19 this afternoon. The Department also announced that two additional Correctional Officers assigned to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution have tested positive for COVID-19.

The inmate, who is over the age of 60, is housed in one of two nearby housing units that have been carefully monitored by healthcare workers for the past week, with temperature checks two times a day. On Monday, April 6, when the inmate first registered a fever, he was moved immediately to the prison infirmary, where he was isolated and a COVID-19 test was administered. The inmate is receiving treatment in a negative pressure isolation room and his condition is stable at this time.

One additional inmate, from the same housing unit, also has registered a fever during the temperature checks conducted the morning of Tuesday, April 7, and he also is being treated in isolation in the prison infirmary. This second inmate has also been tested for COVID-19, and the test result is pending. **No other inmates from the housing units are symptomatic at this time and no additional inmate COVID-19 tests across any DOC facility are pending at this time. In an abundance of caution, DOC is moving the inmates from the housing unit in which the COVID-19 patient was housed to a vacant building across the compound that provides greater physical separation among the inmates. There, they will continue to be observed twice daily for COVID-19 symptoms.**

“We have been preparing for an inmate to test positive for COVID-19 and have implemented our treatment and containment plan,” **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** “DOC has a strong track record of containing infectious diseases, and we will do the same with this coronavirus.”

The DOC has taken the following actions in the adjoining housing units where the COVID-19 inmate was housed:

- Inmates in both housing units have been placed in quarantine, with staffing by Correctional Officer who are consistently assigned to these duty posts.

- Officers assigned to housing units under quarantines are authorized to wear face shields, face masks and gloves at all times.
- Inmates have been issued face masks.
- A specialized fogging machine has been used to sterilize the housing units, in addition to multiple thorough cleanings each day.
- Inmates in the unit are receiving meals with single-use paper products.
- Each inmate continues to be closely monitored by healthcare staff, including two temperature checks with a thermometer each day.

The Department of Correction also announced that two additional Correctional Officers have tested positive for COVID-19

- The first Officer, who is assigned to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, was last at the facility 10 days ago, on Saturday, March 28. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive COVID-19 test result was received by the Officer late last evening and verified today by the DOC.
- The second Officer, who is assigned to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, was last at the facility 13 days ago, on Wednesday, March 25. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive COVID-19 test result was received by the Officer today and verified by the DOC.

These are the fifth and sixth Correctional Officers to test positive for COVID-19, in addition to three contract healthcare providers who have tested positive for COVID-19.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmate or the Correctional Officers for privacy protection.

The DOC is continuing to employ new measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including specialized disinfecting equipment and use of face masks by officers and contract healthcare employees and quarantine, on top of its aggressive prevention, screening and cleaning efforts, which includes:

1. All persons entering any DOC facility are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a digital thermometer.
2. Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
3. Newly-arriving inmates to DOC facilities are isolated from the rest of the inmate population for 14-days while being monitored for symptoms of respiratory infection.

In addition, the DOC [has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within](#)

[facilities](#). Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, are being transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19, and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases, on <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow DOC at *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

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